

share in the murder of Riccio, and hopelessly discredited himself by his cowardly desertion of his associates ; but it is by no means certain that Mary had not given him fair cause for jealousy at her familiarity with her favourite, and she certainly was not the most tractable of women. There were faults on both sides, and Mary's growing passion for Bothwell assuredly does not tend to exculpate her from a share of the blame for the estrangement between them. Estrangement deepened into hatred on Mary's part, and this hatred culminated in the tragedy of the Kirk of Field. Of Bothwell's share in that foul deed there can be no question, and others besides him—Maitland, Argyll, Huntly, Moray — had, it would seem, gone the length of discussing with Mary at Craigmillar some means, not positively illegal, for getting rid of the insufferable husband, and, with the exception of Moray, probably knew of Bothwell's ruffianly intentions. If Mary was not guilty of co-operation with Bothwell, she did her best to make herself odious and rouse suspicion, which quickly became conviction, by marrying the murderer, whom a court of justice, of which the slippery Maitland and Argyll were members, whitewashed for the purpose. Viewed in the light of her subsequent conduct, she had herself to blame for the implication that in caressing the fever-stricken Darnley at Glasgow, in removing him to the lonely house in the Kirk of Field, in acting the part of the fond wife while the bags of gunpowder lay in the room below ready for explosion on the night of the 9th February 1567, she was doing her infamous part in the consummation of a dastardly crime. Leaving the Casket Letters out of account, the circumstantial evidence is strong against her.

The suspicion of her guilt quickened the reaction against the impossible pass to which things were tending. The Bothwell marriage swelled it to floodtide, and one short month after its celebration followed the melancholy surrender at Carberry Hill, and the enforced abdication in Lochleven Castle, in spite of her passionate protests, and the angry bluster of Elizabeth on the sacredness of royalty.

The antagonists of Mary demanded her abdication on constitutional and moral grounds, and even debated whether to stop short of the death penalty. Some of them were certainly